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Book Notes

by DICK LOCHTE

"My work draws on nothing that's apparent from my personal life," Elmore Leonard says. It's just as well, judging by the sleazy, if colorful, characters and perilous situations confronting his heroes. In his newest tricky thriller, "Glitz" (Arbor House: $14.95; Feb. 28), Miami Beach cop Vincent Mora winds up in Atlantic City bumping into such unlovely specimen as Teddy Magyk, a mother's boy maniac; Ricky the Zit Catalina, a k a Ricky the Sickie; Frank "The Ching" Chingoro, who "used to kill people," and maybe even one or two nice folks.

What writers influenced Leonard? "James M. Cain, to some degree. The major influence in the beginning was Hemingway. . . . But I recognized my attitude about storytelling, not in Hemingway but in authors such as Vonnegut, Richard Bissel and Mark Harris. I felt a kinship with them, with their ability to see humor, absurdities, in serious situations."

Nearly all of Leonard's books, "Glitz" included, have been optioned by film companies. ("Stick" was recently made into a movie by Burt Reynolds.) And he has written scripts from other novels, such as William Kienzle's "The Rosary Murders." Of that craft, he notes: "People who don't know how to write presume to tell you what to write. People who seldom leave Beverly Hills tell you about social behavior out in the world. Writers try to give them reality, and they turn it down or into a comic-strip movie. Raymond Chandler's advice is to wear your second-best suit, artistically speaking, when writing a screenplay; but be polite and thank them when you leave, because you might want to come back."

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PUB ROW—Ross-Erikson, Santa Barbara publisher, has just released "The Southern California Anthology, 1984," edited by Jonathan Woetzel, Michael McLaughlin and Chris Westphal ($9.50). Wanda Coleman, Manazar Gamboa, Gerald Locklin and Ivan Roth are among those represented. And there are interviews with William Burroughs, Norman Cousins and Ray Bradbury. . . . John Rechy, who contributed the introduction to the "Southern California Anthology," has three books newly in reprint from Grove ("City of Night," "The Sexual Outlaw" and "Numbers") and one from Carroll & Graf ("Bodies and Souls"). . . . Arbor House, which has a new editor-in-chief, Ann Harris, will publish writings by George Orwell that were recently discovered in the archives of the BBC, mainly adaptations of stories by such as H. G. Wells and Oscar Wilde and other never-published work, including essays, radio scripts/commentaries on World War II and letters. "Orwell: The Lost Writings" will be published in September of '85. . . . Illuminati has recently issued "Prickly Heat and Cold," the second volume of Richard Meltzer's "authorized autobiography" and Meltzer's controversial and funny "Guide to the Ugliest Buildings of Los Angeles."

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EVENTS—*Today:* 7 p.m., poets Steve Beckman, Kelli Bond, Marta Mitrovich, Leonard Nash, Phyllis Thompson and Mitsuye Yamada appear in the first winter Celebration of the Arts at Dana Point Community Center in Dana Point (24542 San Juan Ave.). . . . 8 p.m., an open reading of poetry takes place at Beyond Baroque in Venice (681 Venice Blvd.). Sign up prior to 8 p.m. . . . *Tuesday:* 7-9 p.m., Robin Blaser and Lyn Hejinian read their poetry at Fellowship Hall of Westwood United Methodist Church (10497 Wilshire Blvd.), sponsored by the UCLA Extension Writers' Program. . . . 10 p.m., James Carroll talks about his "Prince of Peace" with Connie Martinson on Group W's Ch. 10 and Valley Cable's Ch. 57. . . . *Wednesday:* 7-10 p.m., author-editor Bayla Winters chairs a nine-week writing workshop for UCLA Extension at Scott United Methodist Church in Pasadena. Call (818) 846-1879. . . . *Thursday:* 10:30 a.m., Art Seidenbaum speaks about "Out of Print" at the Fairfax Library (161 S. Gardner St.). . . . *Saturday:* 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Dick Turpin, Los Angeles Times real estate editor, chairs a one-day seminar on Careers for Journalists in UCLA's Architecture Building. Call Extension, 825-0641. . . . 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Kathleen Wiegner, senior editor of Forbes, begins a nine-week UCLA Extension course in business and financial reporting at 3157 Bunche Hall. Call 825-0641.

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FINALLY—Paul McMahon's "Potato Jokes" (Long Shadow: $3.95) is filled with punny punch lines (i.e., Who rules over the kingdom of French fries? The Duke of Oil. What did he title his autobiography? "Lord of the Fries."). My favorite: Where do rich potatoes send their children to boarding school? Au Groton Academy. In case you wondered who the poet laureate of potatoes might be, it's Ogden Mash.

Send material for Book Notes, including poetry readings, to Dick Lochte, P.O. Box 5413, Santa Monica, Calif. 90405 no later than 10 days before issue date.

Temporary connection to life in India

AN INDIAN ATTACHMENT: THE TRUE STORY OF AN ENGLISHWOMAN'S HAUNTING LOVE AFFAIR WITH A YOUNG SIKH by Sarah Lloyd (Morrow: $12.95; 244 pp.)

India: mud huts that rise like sculptures from the sun-baked earth; buffaloes and camels ruminating under banyan and pipal trees; men squatting in groups outside Sikh temples that house and feed travelers; timeless groups of bicycle repairers; peacocks, bee-eaters, king fishers. . . .

India: decomposing edges of metal roads; sacred rats that scavenge the meager food supplies; cramped rooms that shelter 10 or 12 people; staggering unemployment rates; religious communities ruled by corrupt, self-proclaimed saints. . . .

Sarah Lloyd, a British landscape architect, who has traveled and lived in the Soviet Union, South America, Egypt, the Sudan and China, attempts to shed her European difference when she arrives in India, dressing in the loose cotton garments the Indian women wear, sleeping on *charpoyss* (or mats) in mud huts, eating and preparing *pakoras* (gram-flour appetizers) and *raitas* (a yogurt dish). She experiences a sense of belonging, so different from her life in England where, often, she felt "an overwhelming desolation and alienation." Yet, after two years in India, the limited communication in Panjabi, the restrictions and privileges that come with her status as a foreigner and a chilling sense of isolation motivate her return to England.

Reviewed by Ursula Hegi

"An Indian Attachment" evokes the sounds, smells and sights of India, a country where marriages are arranged and the responsibilities of women and men clearly separated, a country where the births of sons are celebrated and the births of daughters tolerated, a country where Lloyd becomes absorbed in a pattern of life that has hardly changed in centuries. At first, she welcomes the uncluttered simplicity, but gradually she grows frustrated by the limitations.

Though the subtitle of Lloyd's book promises a "Haunting Love Affair With a Young Sikh," her emotional link to Jungli, the young Sikh she lives with for two years, remains undeveloped. If there is any love affair at all, it is with the country—Jungli merely seems a representative for India's contrasting appeals: mysterious and simple; tender and harsh; sullen and unreachable. He is addicted to opium, has spent years in prison and accepts violence as a way of life.

Drawn to the unfamiliar, Lloyd explores the differences; but, when her curiosity is satisfied and the unfamiliar becomes predictable, India and Jungli lose their attraction for her. "An Indian Attachment" is a sharply drawn account of rural India and of a fragile, temporary connection between two people that was nurtured by their inability to understand each other.

Hegi, author of "Intrusions," is an assistant professor in the creative writing department at Eastern Washington University.

A courageous story without passion

INTO THE MOUTH OF THE CAT by Malcolm McConnell (Norton: $13.95; 253 pp.)

In the minds of at least two generations, there will never be a consensus on that malignant involvement known as "The Vietnam Experience." What we of a certain age perceive when we think of "Vietnam" are fractured, kaleidoscopic images. The telecasted helicopters, corpses, chaos, frustration and grief; the bitter domestic front, marches and bombings, families rent by the delineating question, "Whose side are you on?" Veteran and non-participant alike, each of us owns a shard of those images.

Perception is where problems arise with "Into the Mouth of the Cat."

Malcolm McConnell has written a narrative of courage and heroism. In November of 1967, Air Force Capt. Lance Sijan was shot down over Laos. Badly injured and lacking food or water, he managed to evade capture for six weeks. Once caught, Sijan overpowered a guard and escaped, only to be recaptured and tortured (as part of his interrogation). According to cell mate Guy Gruteres, Sijan successfully resisted all his captors' interrogation attempts, yet, ultimately, died in captivity at Hanoi.

Reviewed by Michael Leyland

A dramatic story, and McConnell would have the thought processes stop there. But Vietnam was a complex issue—the ultimate skew to the sensibilities of post-World War II.

Sijan was a superior military man and patriot. But questions about why he was there in the first place, or why the flight planning of some of the bombing sorties was so inept rise with no malice. McConnell addresses the spirit of the latter question but only in passing.

"Into the Mouth of the Cat" was commissioned by "Reader's Digest," and it reads like an expanded article from that magazine. We are informed of Sijan's situations, but rarely does the reader feel the experience of them. For all of his intensively detailed descriptions (including a stupefying load of military terminology and acronyms), McConnell conveys little emphatic passion. We are kept at much the same sanitized distance from Sijan's drama as we were by television from the actual war.

Leyland, a local free-lance critic, contributes to Book Review and is a pop music critic.

Best Sellers

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

FICTION

1 **The Sicilian** by Mario Puzo (Linden)
2 **The Talisman** by Stephen King and Peter Straub (Viking)
3 **Love and War** by John Jakes (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich)
4 **The Fourth Protocol** by Frederick Forsyth (Viking)
5 **Illusions of Love** by Cynthia Freeman (Putnam's)
6 **So Long, and Thanks for All the Fish** by Douglas Adams (Harmony)
7 **The Life and Hard Times of Heidi Abromowitz** by Joan Rivers (Delacorte)
8 **Lincoln** by Gore Vidal (Random House)
9 **Jitterbug Perfume** by Tom Robbins (Bantam)
10 **Life Its Ownself: The Semi-Tough Adventures of Billy Clyde Puckett** by Dan Jenkins (Simon & Schuster)
11 **God Knows** by Joseph Heller (Knopf)
12 **. . . And Ladies of the Club** by Helen Hooven Santmyer (Putnam's)
13 **Stillwatch** by Mary Higgins Clark (Simon & Schuster)
14 **Nutcracker** by E.T.A. Hoffmann, translated by Ralph Manheim, pictures by Maurice Sendak (Crown)
15 (Tie) **First Among Equals** by Jeffrey Archer (Linden) and **The Unbearable Lightness of Being** by Milan Kundera (Harper & Row)

GENERAL

1 **Iacocca** by Lee Iacocca with William Novak (Bantam)
2 **Pieces of My Mind** by Andrew A. Rooney (Atheneum)
3 **Loving Each Other** by Leo Buscaglia (Slack/Holt, Rinehart & Winston)
4 **"The Good War": An Oral History of World War Two** by Studs Terkel (Pantheon)
5 **Hey, Wait a Minute, (I Wrote a Book!)** by John Madden with Dave Anderson (Villard)
6 **Women Coming of Age** by Jane Fonda with Mignon McCarthy (Simon & Schuster)
7 **What They Don't Teach You at Harvard Business School** by Mark H. McCormack (Bantam)
8 **Better Homes and Gardens Cookbook** (Better Homes and Gardens)
9 **Dr. Burns' Prescription for Happiness** by George Burns (Putnam's)
10 **Above Paris** by Robert Cameron and Pierre Salinger (Cameron)
11 **Moses the Kitten** by James Herriot (St. Martin's)
12 **Martha Stewart's Hors d'Oeuvres** by Martha Stewart (Potter)
13 **Nothing Down** by Robert G. Allen (Simon & Schuster)
14 **The Bridge Across Forever** by Richard Bach (Morrow)
15 **The Weaker Vessel** by Antonia Fraser (Knopf)

AND THE CRITICS COMMEND

A Likely Story, Donald E. Westlake (Penzler). Satire about the sophisticated worlds of New York book publishing and mate-swapping.

Gone the Dreams and Dancing, Douglas C. Jones (Holt, Rinehart & Winston). Author's 10th novel examines the fate of the Comanches herded onto a government reservation and their painful coming to terms with encroachment of white man's culture.

The Reign of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Revolution, Shaul Bakhash (Basic Books). An Iranian journalist's study of Khomeini's rise to power and the future of the Islamic republic.

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